

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for his courtesy in conducting a telephone interview with Applicant's representative, Joshua M. Povsner, on April 9, 2008. In the above-noted telephone interview, the Examiner requested that the priority information listed on the first page of the application be updated to include issued patents. Applicants' representative and the Examiner agreed that amendments as presented herein would lead to the withdrawal of the outstanding rejection, though the Examiner also requested that Applicants address in the present remarks several of the points raised in the rejections.

Upon entry of the present amendment, the second paragraph of the specification will have been amended to update priority information to include the patent number of the issued parent (i.e., U.S. Patent No. 6,163,734).

In the outstanding Office Action, claims 14 and 21-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as indefinite. Upon entry of the present amendment, claim 14 will have been amended. The herein-contained amendments should not be considered an indication of Applicants' acquiescence as to the propriety of any outstanding rejection. Rather, Applicants have amended the claims to advance prosecution and obtain early allowance of claims in the present application.

As explained in the above-noted telephone interview, the program preparing method recited in claim 14 enables minimization of punch and die replacements by allotting punches and dies already on respective support members for a workplace region to be processed. The number of punches and dies that need to be replaced/exchanged on the support members is thereby minimized. Knowledge of which punches and dies are already on the respective support

members is, of course, a prerequisite to minimizing replacements of punches and dies on the respective support members.

The affirmatively-recited features of the final five paragraphs of claim 14 can be read together in context without confusion and without contradicting any portion of the four contextual paragraphs of the preamble. According to the affirmatively-recited features of claim 14, punches mounted on the punch support member and dies mounted on the die support member are identified. Additionally, a punch and a die stored in the tool storage device and selected in generating the NC program are identified. An NC program is generated, in part, by selecting a punch mounted on the punch support member and a die mounted on the die support member, and identification of such a mounted punch and a mounted die are, of course, prerequisite to selection in generating the NC program. Thus, the identification recited in various of the five final paragraphs of claim 14 is identification of the sort recited in the fourth paragraph of the preamble of claim 14.

That is, identification of a die or punch is a prerequisite to allotment of the die or punch according to claim 14. However, not all identified dies or punches must be allotted for a particular NC program. Rather, dies and punches both on the support members and in the tool storage device may be identified but not allotted. Thus, the various recitations of dies and punches in claim 14 may be considered to overlap, but may, in fact, refer in some cases to different dies and punches than those previously recited in claim 14.

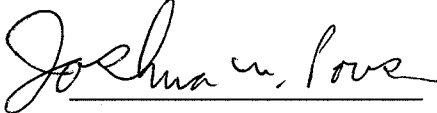
Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejection is respectfully requested, and believed appropriate.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based on prior art, should be considered

to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to be attached thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
Takehiko SHIGEFUJI et al.

 Joshua M. Povsner
Reg. #42,086

Bruce H. Bernstein
Reg. No. 29,027

April 14, 2008
GREENBLUM & BERNSTEIN, P.L.C.
1950 Roland Clarke Place
Reston, VA 20191
(703) 716-1191